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571 619 to the spirit of Mamujaji. These Matsui Crocodiles, though they can trace their ancestry to the Ngwato of Bechuanaland, are, firstly, a closely linked lineage in their district and, secondly, they are relatives-in-law of the royal group as well as of several other groups, including Maculana; but the other Crocodile groups never so much as obtrude themselves in their interests or consideration. There are the Crocodiles of Maunadala, who also answer *nyaiguni*; yet they have a distinctive praise in which they refer to themselves as the 'outcasts of the rain' (*murɔka wa matsi a bula*), because they are unable to make rain. They also are Crocodiles of Uudupi, but they are quite distinctive. They have a long history; they lived on the furthermost southern boundaries of Uulooedu relatively independent even for these parts; they held their national 'schools', as they still do to-day, with scant deference to the precedence that should be accorded to the queen; and among them are celebrated doctors of the *mahowa*, *nyali*, and *gomona* complex of institutions. They owe their solidarity not so much to their common ancestry as to their concentration in a district in which they have been able to rule themselves and to build up their own traditions; but it is the solidarity of the people of Maunadala, whatever their totem or ancestry, not that of the Crocodiles. And much the same applies to Khaḍa, the Elephants of Sefareni, also called *ɓaa Khadaga*. Their genetic relationship with the Leba, though, by way of derogation, affirmed by their neighbours, cannot be credited; there is no association, no intermarriage, no acknowledged relationship with the Leba. Their immediate alliance is to Khaḍa and the district; their ultimate alliance is with the royal nuclear group; with other Elephants they have nothing in common. And so we may go through all the constituent groups.

We have said enough to dispel the idea that the tie of real or supposed common ancestry in itself is of importance. In the larger groups the union that exists is due to other factors. The bonds within them do not even necessarily imply an informal feeling of preferential comradeship. The groups and sub-groups are not as such charged with specific functions, though, as we have seen, individuals in them may have special functions. For some time now one of the families of the Mudiga has been responsible for distributing the rain medicine (*mufuvo*), but it would be a contraption foreign to the Lovedu that the Mudiga only could be entrusted with this work. Not only Ramafalo, a Pig of Lunda, but many others of different groups are doctors of rain; and the same applies to other special positions.

571 ✱ 619 It is not difficult to see how these things work. One may still observe the process of the introduction of a new cult in neighbouring tribes. Ramakwala, a Crocodile, recently brought the *gomona* to the Tswale tribe, just as another Crocodile brought it to the Ubwa of Makhatho. By running the 'school', these foreigners pocket some of the fees and naturally try to safeguard their rights. Their children follow them and the special function or privilege appears to be attached to the group of Crocodiles. But in time the drums of the cult become the drums, not of the Ramakwala, but of the chief; his descendants may still take a prominent part, not because they are Crocodiles, but because some of the secrets

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and medicines are in their hands, or rather in the hands, not of the group, but of the specific family. That family may be honoured by being given a district to rule, and, as marriage is patrilocal, the area gradually may contain a fair percentage of the lineage of Crocodiles of Ranakwalo. They may be lucky and retain the privilege, but there need be no necessary continued association between the *ranakwalo* and the *gomana*. All depends on the circumstances.

No one thinks of a certain group as having certain functions, from which other groups are excluded. Yet only some district heads may, for instance, hold the great national 'schools'; it is rather the privilege of those heads whose people have traditionally held them. But this is not considered to be a privilege of the groups; it is the privilege of a lineage if that lineage happens also to be in charge of a district, for the organization is territorial. The Lovedu, indeed, use the word *khwa*, but, as applied to groups of people, it does not mean a segment of any kin group. One speaks of the *khwa* of Mavulana, for instance; but the term refers to the people that live in the district of Mavulana, not the *ravavulana* who are scattered over many districts. One may even speak of the *khwa* of Mulogwane, meaning a section of the capital which was in charge of Mulogwane. Equally, one hears of the groups, the Mudiga, the Mahasha, the Crocodiles of Udupi and so on spoken of as the *dikhwa* of the tribe. The connotation of the term is quite indefinite; it is as likely to refer to a group or sub-group of people as to a district; the word is not commonly used and is considered to be foreign.

The patrilineal groups or sub-groups have as such no functions. They do not regulate marriage, nor do they imply co-operation and mutual helpfulness. They are not at the basis of solidarity in legal and political situations. It is not unilateral grouping which unites people in their common interests or common activities, except when we come to the smaller sub-divisions, in which close relationship is acknowledged. If there was any real cohesion within them, the groups or sub-groups would cut across both tribes and districts; they would constitute a challenge to the principle of local contiguity, and the culture would be as diverse as the groups are numerous. Lack of group cohesion helps the diffusion of the fundamental values and institutions. There is great diversity in details, but the broad pattern of the culture stands out boldly. Unilateral grouping of a smaller kind, such as the core of a lineage, is not disruptive, for, on the one hand, the lineages which give tone to the remarkably autonomous districts are intimately linked with the queen and the tribal structure and, on the other hand, they harmonize admirably with that local unit which is a great political unit. Co-residence tends to be limited to the immediately effective lineage, the regulative principle being patrilocal marriage. The sentiments developing about co-residence are strengthened by inheritance and succession in the male line; the core of the lineage has common property and other interests. The segregation of this core is promoted by the tendency to take a name which, according to the circumstances, is the name of a grandfather or a father. It is the lineage, or, rather, the operative segment of a lineage, that may be regarded as an important institution in the society.

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CHAPTER VIII

FERTILITY AND THE DRUM CULT

The setting of the sacred drums in a mystical cult—initiation into the secrets of the whistling ancestors—calendric observances connected with fecundity, masks, and mummeries.

794 Besides the girls' puberty ceremony and the circumcision of boys, there are other initiation ceremonies among the Lovedu. One is the *nyali* (often looked upon as the women's counterpart of circumcision because of its regimentation), contemporaneous with which is the boys' *vuhwera*, consisting largely of masked dancing; another is the *gomana* for men. These are closely interwoven with a fertility and rain cult which, because of its association with sacred drums, one may call the drum cult. Their educational object, never very strongly marked in Bantu initiation schools, pales into insignificance before the ceremonial. Indeed the *gomana* as a 'school' is only an aspect of *gomana* ceremonial as a whole, the primary function of which is to secure rain. The *nyali-vuhwera-gomana* complex is characterised by esoteric masks, mummeries, and mysteries and by a category of values which we may term the 'mystical philosophy' of the Lovedu. We shall give merely a brief picture of the complex, because, at the time of writing, the first *nyali-vuhwera* held for thirty-five years is still in progress and our ideas as to its true meaning are far from being settled.

794 796 The sacred drum cult has many ramifications. The *zwidjani*, supposed to be ancestral spirits coming to earth to take part in *gomana* singing and drumming of the sacred drums, have become incorporated into other aspects of the culture. They appear in the bush near the village whenever a harvest offering has been made in the families of royal [783] relatives; they come at the installation of a new district head and at the death of close relatives of the queen. On these occasions they join in the singing and dancing of *lenaga* songs, songs associated with the *nyali* of men and which, in addition to the above-mentioned occasions, are employed also when women dance for rain. The type of instrument by [774] means of which the *zwidjani* whistle or blast out their songs and messages is used also by the Bird, the ruling spirit of the *nyali*.

534 778 Drums are much used in Lovedu life; they are played in the *guka* dance to the accompaniment of reed pipes, they are important in all initiations except circumcision, they are beaten for days at the dancing of possessed people, and it is significant that the public recognition by the queen of a new district head at his installation consists in the handing over of a drumstick (*khisha khe goma*). Drums are of two types: the long cylindrical drum played with the hands as it lies on its side and the *goma*, a rounded drum with handles, played by means of a drumstick as it stands in an upright position. The sacred drums (*digomana*) of the tribe are of the *goma* type, but, unlike ordinary *goma* drums, are played by hand, not with a drumstick. They are four in number, each with its special

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name, and are kept at present in a village beside the bush in which the last three rulers lie buried. Their keeper is a descendant of Malegudu, eldest son of Mugɔdɔ, who fought with Mujaji for the throne. These drums are not to be seen by the public, nor are people, except inmates of the royal district, supposed to pass anywhere near there. In appearance and decoration they are no different from ordinary drums, but they are made in a special way and it is said that the maker 'will see them with his eyes but never hear them with his ears' (*i.e.* he will be put to death when his work is done). The largest is *phaŋaŋr*, which stands about 4 ft. high; next in size is *payya*; then comes *pekukure*; while the smallest and most important of all is *ruŋwedi*, to which is attributed powers even of locomotion, because in 1891, when Albasini set fire to the royal village, it was the only one of the *gomana* drums that was not burnt. While all four *gomana* drums are said to contain a human skull instead of the stone that one usually finds inside it, *ruŋwedi*, the smallest, has the facial skin of a human being placed (in strips, it is said) under the resonator of ox hide and has, smeared on the outside, the body dirt of the person (said to be always a chief councillor or other important person of royal blood) killed for its manufacture. This drum is thought to be closely associated with the welfare of the tribe. Should the chief have occasion to escape from enemies, she should take with her this drum, and it is said that, when the heir to the throne receives instruction in the use of rain medicines just prior to the death of the ruling chief, she must be sitting upon it. In some of the neighbouring tribes the sacred drums are pierced on the death of the chief.

The care of these sacred drums, involving periodic smearing with fat and ochre to keep out weevils and moths, renewal of the skin resonators, building and repair of the hut in which they are kept, is the work of a special section of people, those of Ravothata, whose totem is *ghwe* of Dzilebye. Dzilebye is in Phalaborwa, where this drum cult is much stronger than among the Lovedu. These Ravothata are also responsible for closing the *nyali* initiation at the capital when they come at its end with their weird-costumed dancing performers, the *magigidye*. Thus once again the *gomana* and the *nyali*-*vukuwa* are linked into a common complex. The sacred drums, played only on special ceremonial occasions and by men, not women, who are usually responsible for drumming, are looked upon as gods (*modimo*). The praise of *phaŋaŋr*, the largest, is 'Leg of *phaŋaŋr* of Mahale [the old chief]; if it is not a god we can throw it away rattling to the pool' (*Gotɔ la phaŋaŋr a Mahale ha nga re a ri modimo re ga laga ra khaqulana ra isa madibeni*). T'se Thawina and Narevi, tribes to the south of the Lovedu, offer to the sacred drums the first-fruits, and everywhere their beating is associated with rain and the agricultural year. Not only are the drums gods, but their sound is thought to be very pleasing to the *midzimu*, those ancestral spirits who, when the drums are sounded, come and sing and dance. The knowledge that their part is played by initiated men does not appear to detract from their importance in the eyes of those who are in the secret. The instrument used consisted in the old days of the tibia of a human being with a feather inserted (and there is reason to believe that some of these are still extant) but to-day

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they use mostly two pieces of wood slightly concave on the inside in which a piece of sinew or reed is temporarily inserted. The language being tune-bound, messages and songs can be understood when whistled. Not all ancestral spirits, but only those of the Lovedu proper and of some of the important groups, such as the Khaba and Narasi, are thought to be able to visit the earth as *muidjimi*.

The most important feature of the drum cult was the beating of the sacred drums in an enclosure near the village, usually in the afternoon and evening on six successive days twice every year: in the spring just before the sowing and in winter after the harvest thanksgiving. The spring drumming was preceded by propitiation of the royal ancestors by means of a libation on their graves in Deja Forest, where the earlier chiefs lie buried. There was a special procession which no one was to see on pain of death, the Mulodzi River had to be crossed at a special spot called *Khijudu-nakolelo* (washing place of great people) and it is maintained by some that a black ox was also slaughtered. The district head at Deja, who was responsible for clearing a way to the graves, had to plant near the royal graves a little of every seed cultivated. The people would then see, it is said, which grew best and would plant much of that. The *gwamma*, the beating of the sacred drums, 'was the chief thing that had the power of asking rain from the ancestors'. The sounding of the drums at harvest-time was a thanksgiving. The first harvest *gwamma* after the circumcision took the form of an initiation, in which the neophytes were introduced into the drum ritual and the secret of *muidjimi*, and received cuts on their faces as a sign that they had passed through it.

Though the sacred drums are still kept and the Ravethaga people are still called to repair the hut in which they are placed, the regular beating of *gwamma* drums has fallen into disuse. The last *gwamma* initiation held officially by the queen in the tribe was in 1892, just before the accession of the present queen. It is difficult to account for this lapse when among neighbouring tribes the cult is still fully carried out. Some say the reason lies in the ritual murders that are associated with the drums, but since it is an accepted principle that a sheep may satisfactorily take the place of a human being and, moreover, this difficulty must somehow have been overcome in other tribes, this reason does not appear good enough. Possibly the cult was introduced from the south and had not become sufficiently assimilated or taken deep enough root to survive the lethargy induced by European contact. Perhaps the rain-making powers of the queen herself made it largely unnecessary. It is not impossible that it will suddenly spring back to life, as did the *nyali* in 1938-9 after a lapse of over thirty years.

Though the queen herself now holds no *gwamma*, the institution is not dead. Elements such as *muidjimi* have taken permanent root and the queen has allowed a stranger, Ramkwale, a rain doctor of the Ivanga tribe who came to live on European-owned land under her jurisdiction, to hold a *gwamma* with, of course, his own drums, and in 1939, when he came to ask that boys from the royal village should be allowed to attend the initiation, she gave her consent. He holds one *gwamma* a year, receiving

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[facing p 128]

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special permission from the queen on each occasion, and initiates circumcised and uncircumcised alike.

Gomana initiation to-day as held by Rasekwale does not differ from the ceremonial in the queen's own *gomana* of old, though it is regarded as a 'business', a source of revenue to Rasekwale, without the great power of the old Maulwi ceremony. Maduane relates his experiences in 1929. He and about twenty others from the royal village, some of them over forty years of age because there had been no initiation for so long, set out for the scene of the initiation some twelve miles away in the charge of some men (*madabi* or shepherds) who had been through the *gomana* initiation. They walked at a very fast pace, almost running, because they 'were anxious to be initiated'. As members of the royal village, they did not, like the others, pay 5*s.* entrance fee, but on arrival in the evening were offered two huts to sleep in and given a meal. At sunrise next morning, when the *gomana* drums began to sound in the enclosure kept permanently for *gomana* purposes, the initiates gathered in the courtyard to be ceremonially beaten. This beating with sticks that have been medicated is said to *thusa* (help) the neophytes just as the *ku thusa* ceremony of a baby on the day it is first taken out of the hut strengthens it to withstand evil influences of the outside world. This beating is thus conceived to give health to the neophyte. The head of the school (Rasekwale) himself stood at the gate holding two canes, a bent one in the left hand, a straight one in the right. As each boy passed with bent head and bare back, Rasekwale, while pretending to beat with the left hand, really beat on the back with his right. The boys then put on the shirts they had had to doff for the beating and were conducted, filled with fearful anticipation, to the lodge by shepherds, who surrounded them and told them to look straight ahead.

On their arrival in the enclosure, they were made to kneel in two rows facing each other with bent heads for the operation. First some one blowing a spirit whistle brushed a handful of *mukolomi* grass (*Rhynchelytrum repens*) over their heads, then two operators, one for each row, came with awl and knife. Four semicircular cuts are made on either cheek from mouth to cheekbone, the awl being used for lifting up the flesh. The process is very painful, but no importance is attached to manliness and the drumming and whistling drown all cries. Immediately after the operation, a piece of cloth (of any colour), bought by each boy for 6*d.* at the store, is put over the head, with loose ends hanging over the face and tucked in at the back under the shirt. This cloth must be worn when the initiates walk about, so that the cuts are not seen by the uninitiated, who are told that the boys are bitten by the *gomo*. To Maduane it came as a great surprise to find that the crying of the spirits was caused by whistles. After the operation the man whistled the song, 'Whoever reveals a *gomo* brings about his own death or that of his father or mother', which was interpreted for the benefit of those who found it difficult to follow the whistling. They set out for home again almost immediately after the operation, for the formulae of the *gomana* are taught them at home.

The journey home was slow. The initiates, accompanied by five

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779 shepherds, walked, whistling as they went and holding sticks they had cut. Soon they met a man and were ordered by the shepherds to whistle '*mulao wa ga*' (my law). The stranger in reply recited a *gomoma* law for them. A little further on they came upon three women and a man, all of whom fled on their approach, for, should they meet any one unable to give them a law, he is beaten unmercifully. The next initiated man they met asked the initiates to give him a law after he had recited one and, when they could not, he demanded 'his leg', i.e. each boy was to sit down holding up the left leg to be seized and beaten. As, however, they had not yet had an opportunity of learning any formulae, their shepherds procured exemption for them by giving the man snuff instead. That night they asked for food at a village, for they had had nothing all day, but the man insisted on their sleeping there and killed a goat in their honour. They set out again long before dawn so as not to be seen by women.

At home an enclosure of branches was made for them very near the village where they had to spend their time for the next few weeks. Here their food was brought from home by the shepherds, but they slept in the village in huts set aside for this purpose, coming in late at night and leaving again before dawn when women began to stamp. There were no food regulations. By day the smallest boys went out to herd goats, but the old initiates remained in the lodge, going out every afternoon either to fetch wood, each one log only, for the evening fires, or sometimes to hunt birds. When outside the lodge, they have to whistle as a warning to the uninitiated not to approach too near. They may not talk to each other except when out of sight. During this time many formulae, most of which are quite meaningless to the initiates as well as to older people, are taught by the shepherds, who beat them when they are unable to remember them; but there are no songs. The *lilwa* are passwords which indicate that you have been initiated. On the day after their arrival home, powdered medicine was given the initiates to put in their wounds, but for the rest one day was much like another. By the fifth week, when they were all thoroughly bored and tired, the order was given that they must go and wash at a place near Maulwi called *ngoho-mawoha* (where the *gomoma* initiates wash). While they washed, the *mwiyajani* were crying in the bush and the big sacred drum at Maulwi was beaten a few times. Then they went home where, on kneeling to greet, each one received 1*s.* from his parents (*ku nomsa*). The lodge is merely broken down and the cloths taken home to be used. The *gomoma* initiation is an initiation into a cult rather than a 'school', for, beside the formulae, the boys receive no instruction beyond the warning not to divulge what they have seen in the *gomoma* lodge. The main purpose of their seclusion is to enable their wounds to heal before they can take part in ordinary life.

881 The *nyali*, generally looked upon as an initiation for girls, is to a great extent also the concern of old and mature men, who from a certain stage take part in it as fully as, if not more so than, the older women. Further, in many districts, though not at the royal village where they do not have *vukuwa* (their boys undergoing a kind of attenuated form of this initiation for a few days only at Mamadale's), the *vukuwa* for boys is held simultaneously

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the *nyali* courtyard by their sisters. They are taught a few 'laws' or formulae associated with the *vukwara*, but their main activities are learning to make the elaborately woven costumes and later to dance in the *nyali* courtyard. Towards the end of the initiation they spend most of their time going about to dance, accepting invitations from other district heads and paying their respects at the royal village. They do beautiful movements to the drumming of their own *nyali* girls. Only two dance at a time and, while they dance, attendants (*modali*) stand near by supervising. The masked boys may whistle out the tune to which they wish to dance or may beg snuff by means of whistling (for this is their only means of conversation during their initiation). When they dance well, women and girls come to give them gifts of leg- or arm-rings. The *vukwara* is a kind of finishing school, an initiation into the secret of what the Bird is and how the costumes are made. It is almost as though this is an esoteric art, the preservation of which has become the main function of the *vukwara*. A person who enters the *vukwara* enclosure may be required to display his skill at weaving and in 1939 a man who was unable to weave (and thus showed himself to be uninitiated) was heavily fined. The fact that there is no *vukwara* held at the royal kraal, whose boys used in the old days to go for this initiation to Khoja or to the *Tsonwai*, a section of the Khoja, suggests that the institution is a more recent adoption than the *nyali*.

It is not easy for a European to appreciate the meaning and value of such institutions as *nyali* and *vukwara*. Most of their features cannot be explained by the Lovedu themselves. They are the result of a long, historical development which, in the absence of all evidence, may never be unravelled. The *nyali* has many aspects. One of the most important is that of a crossing or initiation similar to circumcision. The initiates are often called *vawuli* (crossers) and initiation may be referred to as 'to cross over' (*ku wela*). It is conceived as a period of hardship, a crossing for which medical treatment and ancestral blessings are essential. Respect for those older than oneself is emphasized: the initiates must be humble; but older people, especially the old men who remain in the Bird's enclosure, live royally on the beer and delicacies brought daily by initiates. There is emphasis, too, on the importance of the rank of district heads and chief, and the learning of praises of all the areas, followed towards the end of the initiation by inter-district visits, is an important feature.

Intermingled with and overshadowing the *nyali* as an initiation is the *nyali* as a fertility and rain cult, related to the *gwasa* drum cult and serving the same purpose. The *nyali* lasts a year, a full agricultural cycle, and some of its stages are associated with the seasons: the typical *nyali* dress of the girls cannot be plaited till the grass has grown long; the Bird arrives only when there is plenty of food. The singing of *nyali* songs is believed to bring rain. Even before the rains of the summer of 1938-9 had fallen, it was said in Duiwendu that the year would be one of plenty on account of the *nyali*. These expectations were more than realized, for not only was the summer rainy, but even the winter, which is normally dry, was exceptionally wet. Stress is laid in the *nyali* on grass and vegetation: the girls wear plaited headdresses of grass which are said by

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784 777 778 sense to render them fertile; the *digowa* are almost all made of grasses, reeds, or leaves; the remarkable *nukwera* costumes are made of various special kinds of grass; and on one of the most important excursions made by the *nyali* girls, called *mangini* (at the kraals), they are made to collect the bark of various kinds of trees. The *nyali* as a fertility rite is most clearly seen in the sexual intercourse at the order of the Bird which used to be indulged in towards the end of the initiation on the approach of spring. The true meaning of the Bird is difficult to discover, though it is significant that it is associated with moonlight, comes from a pool, and declares on its departure that it will leave rains behind it. In one praise song of the Bird it appears to be referred to as *vudjaje*, the ancestral spirits: 'I have heard you, Bird of ours and Rabuda of Muhale. The father of giving has gone, O *vudjaje*. There remain only things for which one must pay' (*Gi hu phalaphadi nowi yowu le vudlakufa a Muhale vubufa khi ile, vudjaje, hu sudi kha mushego fela*). This Bird, *gowa* of the old men, is related to the *gomamo* cult, using the same method of whistling through an instrument.

681 714 771 The Lovedu appear to have borrowed *nyali* and *nukwera* and the *gomamo* drum cult from neighbours. Some elements, like *swigidjowi*, have become firmly embedded in a number of institutions; others, like *nukwera*, are looked upon more as entertaining opportunities without any very serious meaning beyond that of giving pleasure. But the sacred drum cult clashes to some extent with the rain cult of the queen and there is little doubt that to this fact one must partly attribute the failure to beat *gomamo* drums in recent years.

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immediate and usually not consciously phrased, yet in the total complex of the culture all things are interconnected, albeit in ways that are not easy to see clearly. The gods help good and bad men alike, they send illness whether one is careful or neglectful of the observances due to them, and the after-life is the same for all. But we should be careful not to deduce too much from this. The position of a sister and her privileges are sanctioned by the gods, as is also the respect due to old people. In general the gods are not upholders of custom, yet on one occasion in 1937 two *mulajiani* cried all day in the bush at Maulwi because some women had broken the taboo against cutting wood there. The chief concern of the gods appears to be to look after their own interests. They complain when they dislike the manner of their burial, but they are undisturbed when twins are not buried in wet soil, even though this has a disastrous effect on the whole country. If they were disturbed about customs in general, instead of things directly affecting them, they would complain of many disturbing changes in these days of culture contact; instead, one only finds that possessing spirits dislike European things and that at offerings European utensils are generally not used.

Another outstanding characteristic is the almost entire absence of any speculative element. The Lovedu are not concerned with such things as the life hereafter and the mode of life of the gods; theirs is essentially a practical religion in which rites are of far greater importance than attitude of mind, action than belief. Its rites are directed to practical ends, such as recovery from illness and the procuring of rain. In vain does one inquire into the meaning or reason of a rite, for the reply always is, 'The bones tell us to do these things,' and the practical end is phrased as determined by the bones. There are considerable differences from one family to another in the conduct of religious rites and the nature of shrines and, since religion is primarily a family concern, few people know what their neighbours do. Not uncommonly one finds a practice said to be impossible by some people accepted as normal by their neighbours.

Lovedu religion is not distinct from magic. The very terminology of the two is identical: *thagulo* is a shrine, dedicated animal, or a sacred object once in the possession of the ancestors, but it is also any charm of bone or herbs concocted by a doctor. *Diphaho* are used in shrines or offerings to make the ancestors forget, as well as to ward off witches from the village. *Hu rivaliio* means both to pray and to utter a spell. *Hu phasa* is used both to approach the gods and with medicines when sending back disease to a witch; one may also *phasa* on the charms in the village gate on the arrival of beer in order that more may come to the village. In a sacrifice for rain, the magical rites are of as great importance as the purely religious; and *hu phasa* in case of illness is thought to have a compelling force. It cannot fail; if it does, there must be some other cause, for an ancestor can never refuse to be placated by the *phasa* rite.

The merging of religion with magic and medicine is everywhere evident, but nowhere is it more prominent than in the cult of possession. This cult is not indigenous; it came with the Thonga and, since its first reception some thirty years ago, has gained considerable popularity.

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771 The form in which it is found is different from that among Shangana-
794 Tonga and lent itself to ready incorporation into Lovedu religion.
177 Among Shangana-Tonga, the possessing spirit is regarded as a foreign spirit from some outside tribe; among the Lovedu it is an ancestor who may, like any ancestor, demand the usual shrine or dedicated animal. The cult is not accepted by all and the royal family deprecate it as foreign and as detracting from their prestige. Its noisiness and showiness, though incongruous with the traditional reserve and lack of display, makes a popular appeal in these more insecure days.

794 A spirit entering a person causes illness and the first object of the cult
753 is directed at curing the illness, so that initiation is regarded as therapeutic. Long-continued illness of a patient, which will yield to no curative treatment, will be diagnosed as due to an ancestral spirit 'pressing him down', because it wants to manifest itself in him. The symptoms are never very definite: Mashishimali was 'ill all over the body' and suffered from swollen legs which five different doctors had tried unsuccessfully to cure; Mamolatela was weak and ailing after the birth of her first child. The symptoms are neither violent, like the running amuck which accompanies *ukuthwasa* among the Nguni, nor of a specifically nervous nature.
[528] Epilepsy, which is common, bears no relation to possession, and any peculiar behaviour is more liable to be attributed to witchcraft than to the spirits. It is believed that a possessed person after death likes in turn to manifest itself in some descendant and there is a tendency for possession to run in families. In one family three sisters and their mother were all possessed. Sometimes, especially where others in the family are possessed, a person does not even get ill; he just becomes possessed when people are singing or dancing in the manner of the cult. Contact with certain localities or people associated with possession is often sufficient. Thus it is said that, should one be among the Sekhwaxha in Portuguese East Africa, who become possessed in a manner different from the Lovedu, one risks becoming possessed by merely picking up something dropped by a member of that tribe or eating the fruit of the fig, *mudzomba* (*Dioospyros wattiliformis*), or *muchichiche* (*Cassia petersiana*).

794 Once it is known that a person is being 'pressed down' by some spirit
755 wishing to manifest itself, a *lelopo* doctor, himself possessed and skilled in dealing with the possessed, is called to cure the patient. This is done, not by exorcism, but by rites designed to enable the spirit to come and make known its wishes along legitimate channels, known in the cult. For the spirits that possess people are not evil spirits to be expelled; they are the ancestors whom one worships, and their desire occasionally to manifest themselves through some living relative is comparable to that impulse towards life that makes them desire shrines, dedicated animals, and the perpetuation of their names in their descendants. The method by which a spirit is enabled to 'come out' and disclose its identity and the possessed person to become the host (*ladala*) of the spirit without being ill consists largely of dancing; and on all subsequent occasions when the
794 spirits manifest themselves they signify their desire to dance.

755 Dancing is the central feature of the cult. The spirits are thought to
536 enjoy this dancing; when manifesting themselves at festivities of the

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possessed, they often say they have come to 'play' with the others and they may even cause slight ill-health on this account. Hence quite often when a possessed person does not feel well, he will ask for the drums, saying he must dance. *Lelipo* dancing consists of fast movements of the foot to the accompaniment of drums or tambourines and rattles. At a seance of *malipo à mulimu*, those who speak *Thwala*, the large hemispherical *gwa* drum is used in addition to the conical drums. All are, however, beaten with the hands, the elbows being placed on the drumskin in a peculiar manner. *Malipo*, who speak Sotho or Lovedu, use only the conical drums in the ordinary manner.

If the dance has a great fascination—after a seance one finds even small children practising the steps—the dress worn by the possessed adds to the attraction. Cloths of different colours are worn round the waist and tied at the back; round the legs are usually leggings of the outer shell of the *dipani* (*Ouratea spinosa*) fruit filled with pebbles to rattle as one dances; on the head is a cap of fur or brightly coloured wool or a head-gear of black feathers, while very often a spear, battle-axe, or stick is brandished in the hand. These are the *swithamo* of the spirit, worn only during possession. The nature of the dress of each possessed person has been indicated by the spirit itself, and people do their best to comply, lest the possessed person dies. Once at a seance the spirit of a woman asked that a beast or, failing that, a goat be 'placed' for him. 'We'll do our best,' the relatives replied, 'but remember we are poor and it is a matter that will take time.' The spirit, angry at this unwillingness, retorted, 'If you don't comply, I'll take away my person [in whom I manifest myself] and go and sleep with her. Tell Makhade (elder brother of the possessed who learnt the profession of doctor from the spirit) I'll take away my profession from him.' 'We'll do our best,' urged the relatives, 'but don't go away in anger.' In spite of this power, possessing spirits have nevertheless to take cognizance of public opinion and the desires of royalty. The spirit of the wife of a royal relative asked for a man's loin-cloth, which women possessed by male spirits occasionally wear, but he refused to allow it on the grounds that for a woman to wear man's attire is unbecoming. An old woman therefore addressed the spirit, saying, 'People here don't like it,' and the spirit was satisfied.

A short description of an institution which contains all the elements of an ordinary seance must suffice to illustrate some of the main features of the cult. When the doctor, called to conduct the initiation, has arrived with his or her attendants, drums are fetched from the district head, and other disciples of the doctor invited to be present. Nothing can, however, be done before the spirit of the doctor descends upon her. To allow this, they retire to a hut and lie down as if to sleep, while an old woman puts down some pinches of snuff on the ground and calls upon the spirits to come. In a few minutes the doctor groans and quivers and the spirit signifies its arrival by a song of greeting. It calls for its *lelipo* clothes and the doctor is dressed. Soon the spirits of her attendants also arrive and treatment, which consists in making the novitiate dance, is begun.

When Betty was being initiated, we arrived early one Saturday evening, attracted by the noise, to find a picturesque scene. It was winter and

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794 five little fires had been lit in the vicinity of the courtyard of Betty's hut.
795 In the centre were three women dancing to the music of drums and
535 rattles. We sat down by the nearest fire and found ourselves with a group
786 of old women. For people had arranged themselves, naturally as in their manner, in age-groups round the various fires; young married women at one, small boys at another, girls above the age of puberty at a third. The dust rose high; what had sounded pleasant enough at a distance became, as one sat in its midst, an almost unbearable din; while in the flickering and uncertain light of the fires the dancing took on a frenzied effect that lent to the scene a wildness and weirdness seldom met with except in travellers' tales of darkest Africa. Never again in our frequent attendances at *malepo* dancing did we recapture that first sense of weirdness so largely due to its novelty and our own ignorance. That night the dancing stopped at 1.30 a.m. but by dawn it had begun again, continuing with intervals of rest during the whole of Sunday and Sunday night. Betty danced most of the time; if she rested too long, the women urged her on, saying, 'How do you expect the spirit to come out if you don't dance?' All this time she was being treated with medicines: black powder mixed with butter fat was smeared on her legs, white froth of medicine churned with a porridge stirrer was applied on various parts of the body, some being administered also internally, and infusions were given her to drink. No food was eaten either by Betty or by the women whose spirits were upon them; the very sight of porridge makes some *malepo* vomit and the only sustenance allowed while dancing is beer, if there happens to be any.

Late on Sunday afternoon they called her mother's brother to try to induce the spirit to manifest itself, for doctors had indicated that the troubling spirit was on the mother's side. Taking a calabash of water in his hand, the mother's brother knelt near the dancing girl and spat mouthfuls of water out on the ground, saying, 'Come out, spirit, that this person also may be well. She remains ailing, and when we go to doctors they tell us it is a spirit. Come outside that this person can be well [cool].' Sometimes, instead of *his phase* with water, mixed grains of all kinds are thrown over the dancer and the words used are, 'We are giving you everything to come.' It may even be that something, which can be overcome only by magical means, is holding back the spirit, as when, on one occasion, the spirit was said to be bewildered at the cross-roads, not knowing which to take. All the roads except that leading into the village were magically 'barred' and the spirit, thus guided, came straight in and manifested itself. Difficult as it is for a spirit to come on the first occasion, once initiation has taken place, it becomes a simple matter. To make a spirit manifest itself, a person has only to dance in the manner of the cult or to lie down while some one calls on it to come. The spirit may also come of its own accord at any time without being induced.

794 Early on the Monday morning Betty, showing signs of exhaustion,
795 began to stagger in her dancing, and people knew the spirit must be near. Her movements became more frenzied, she put up her hands to her head and dragged her feet uncertainly, and then fell to the ground. Several women who had been expecting this, caught and carried her, still quivering and groaning, into the hut. 'Good day, grandparent. Come nicely,

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grandparent,' they kept saying. After a few moments Betty began a song, one usually sung on the arrival of a spirit, giving the name of the spirit upon her—namely, Mamaile, her mother's mother. Those present sang the refrain to the accompaniment of rattles. Staggerings and fallings, groanings or growlings are always signs of an approaching spirit; sometimes the possessed person runs away for a short distance. A goat was now brought into the hut. Its body was smeared with medicine, some was poured down its throat and, after the patient had breathed hard into its mouth, it was taken out and killed. Under supervision of the doctor, small pieces were cut from all parts and placed in a bowl, while the stomach contents and portion of the liver were set aside to be used in curing the patient. The experts say that the sickness from which the ancestor suffered before its death and which presumably causes the patient to suffer, goes into the goat. Before proceeding further, the doctor took the bowl of meat to the hut entrance, where, after setting aside half of it, she placed it with a little snuff on the ground, praying to her spirit. Later this meat was roasted and eaten by small boys. The stomach contents were smeared on various parts of the body of the patient; the small pieces of meat were roasted, mixed with a black powder, and administered on the end of a stick to all four of the possessed people present.

The doctor now heated herself charring chips of various kinds of bark in a basin in which some of the goat's liver had also been put. With this the patient was smoked three times under a blanket till she coughed and spluttered. This took a considerable time, during which the other possessed women sang songs in turn. Mabelewa, who is possessed by a man, called for her pipe in which some hemp was put and evinced great astonishment when her fellow wife, her attendant when she is possessed, struck a match to light it. This was a European innovation unknown in the days of her spirit. Similarly, when a potato was brought, all the possessed women examined it with wonder, asking each other whether it was edible. While the meat of the goat was being cooked with medicine in three pots for three persons, the possessed women sat outside on a mat, an honour accorded to their spirits. They sat, silent and dignified, saying nothing. A fowl was killed in order that its leg might afford a medicine bag for the patient and the chips of bark used in smoking were ground to a powder to be used by the patient when eating of the fire-fruits. It might be mentioned that the doctor carried home with her the hind leg, shoulder, and breast of the goat as her share, while the other meat was regarded as a reward to the crowd for its share in dancing and singing.

For some time people sat and talked to their friends while the doctor worked with her medicines and the possessed women sat quietly in the shade. Suddenly we became aware of a kind of pantomime in which the initiate, directed in song by the doctor, was made to play-act all the work of women. She went to fetch water and wood about 20 yards from home, swept the courtyard, imitated hoeing, the stamping and winnowing of mealies, cooking and dishing up, finally serving food in the correct manner to the small boy whose mother she had married (Betty had married her father's sister). Last of all she was taken to the drums and

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shown how to dance in possessed fashion, all, it was said, lost when her spirit left her she should be lazy and not know how to work. Betty walked as in a dream with a wooden, expressionless look and at times appeared so exhausted that we feared she would not be able to lift the stamper when imitating stamping. This mime-show is not performed in all initiations, nor is a goat always killed, for the methods of doctors differ considerably and the patient's relatives may have no goat. Often the patient is set to dance and treated with medicines till she falls down with the spirit upon her.

It was now three o'clock in the afternoon, and, the initiation being complete, the doctor thought it time that the spirits departed. She ushered the possessed into the hut, where they all sat down, offered them each a pinch of snuff, took a rattle and began her farewell song, the whole company (for the hut had filled with spectators) joining in the refrain. Next the initiate sang her farewell song, mentioning what she wanted as her accessories—several white cloths, a woollen cap, and a spear to hold when dancing. When all had finished singing, they took off their *mujhamo* (clothes), which their attendants (for each possessed person has some one to help him when his spirit appears) put into bundles to take away, and lay down to sleep. After three minutes the doctor grunted and groaned as departing spirits are apt to do, sat up and began dressing in everyday clothes. The others followed her example and went outside. The patient, but a short while before so exhausted, came smiling out of the hut and scolded the people for letting her oversleep in this shocking manner (appearing to have no knowledge of her initiation). Then all washed their faces and urinated in the hedge, as women do on rising in the mornings.

Initiation into the cult is said to make the person well again, and all into whose history one inquiries claim to have been cured. Betty herself had no further trouble. If, however, they become ill again, it may be a second spirit, for many people have three or four. There is, however, no further initiation; the second spirit is merely called upon to manifest itself. A second or third spirit may take possession without causing any illness, merely announcing its arrival and making known its wants when the person is possessed. After initiation the spirit manifests itself when it has some complaint or desire, when the person has broken some taboo, or when specially induced by dancing or prayer. A possessed person has to keep certain taboos: he may never eat such firstfruits as pumpkin leaves or green mealies, marula fruits or beer made of the newly-harvested corn without medicine given him at his initiation and renewable every year or every two years; any new thing undertaken, as when a possessed woman becomes pregnant, must be reported to the spirit. Some *malopo* may not be beaten with a green stick, lest the spirit descend upon them; others may not touch European medicine. Many of them run away from Europeans even when not actually possessed, and one man had to keep his books securely locked in a suit-case lest his wife should see them and become troubled by her spirit. The very mention of the word *lelopo* in the presence of some may cause the spirit to come. Observances are not the same for all and taboos to be observed depend largely on the doctor who

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does the initiation. There are no special burial rites associated with the cult. There is, however, a vague belief that injury to a snake in the village may in some cases harm a possessed person, an interesting belief in view of the fact that there is so little trace in Lovedu religion of the Zulu idea that ancestral spirits manifest themselves in snakes.

There is a special relationship between a possessed person and the doctor who initiated him: every year when the medicine needs renewal, beer or *mavula* cider is prepared, the doctor, who comes with a number of disciples and attendants, is called and there is a great dance of the possessed often lasting several days. This is 'dancing for medicine' (*ho rimela tshidi*). Some possessed people have to be specially doctored before drinking the first *mavula* cider and the *mavula* season is always a time of *lelapo* gatherings; others are required to contribute corn at harvest time for a large *lelapo* dance at the home of the doctor. These gatherings, at which a goat may be slaughtered in addition to the cider provided, add greatly to the prestige of the doctor. There is sometimes considerable jealousy between *malapo* doctors, who, with those initiated by them, may form rival schools. Some doctors refuse to allow their followers to dance with those initiated by other doctors without special permission. At one séance, at which there had been some unpleasantness, the doctor smeared some powder into incisions on the neck, tongue, crown, and sides of the heads of her disciples. Then, taking some medicated water in her mouth, she squirted (*ho phasa*), saying, 'I "place" you. Don't you dance any more. I don't like dancing every day without my special permission. Any *lelapo* who dances where you are dancing will break her leg or be badly hurt.' The remainder of the water was given them to drink.

An interesting feature of the cult of possession is that many people when the spirit is upon them speak in a foreign tongue, said to be Thovela or Kharanga. Investigation into this matter, however, shows that this is not as startling a phenomenon as it might appear. When possessed, a person for the most part sits silent unless he is a doctor. If he speaks at all, this is in monosyllables, for all his wants and messages are conveyed in song. *Lelapo* songs are stereotyped and known to many because the uninitiated have to join in the refrain when rattling the accompaniment. In these songs there is usually a number of foreign words, though many consist purely of meaningless sounds, such as '*We le mee ene e mee mee mee mama mee*'. Often peculiarities in the pronunciation of vowels are interpreted as Thovela. When the refrain begun (*ho nema*) by the possessed person has been taken up by the chorus, he continues with the song or interpolates his own words, usually Sotho with a few foreign words interspersed, till he wishes to stop. In this way he makes known his wishes. It quite frequently happens that no one understands the gibberish of the possessed person, and doctors generally have an attendant who interprets what they wish to convey. There are, however, numerous well-known words in general use by people when their spirit is upon them—for instance, *mafofo* or *mavoto* for *lefofa* (snuff), *bula* or *mvula* for *mantsu* (water), *na ga mbaya* for *na ga ntiya* (they may beat me), *heya* for *hae* (home). But many possessed people speak pure Sotho, and it is recognised that a newly initiated person may not

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794 533 192 know Thovhi. The Lovedu themselves are not critical, and the usual reply when one expresses any doubt about the genuineness of the possessed or the possibility of fraud is, 'If they were not really possessed how could they speak a strange tongue?'

794 It is not our purpose to discuss the psychology of possession among the Lovedu. We should, however, point out that it is in no way associated with abnormalities of character or with crises in the life of the individual. Its symptoms are not of a nervous nature, such as indicate ukuthwasa among Nguni; there are, except when the spirit descends upon them, no twitchings; uncontrollable hiccups are unknown; members of the cult are not hysterical or mentally unbalanced nor can they be distinguished in their daily activities from others. There is no change in the personality of the individual when his spirit is upon him, although some of them sing in a low voice when possessed by a man and others dance in a peculiar way. Nor is there any difference to be seen between one possessing spirit and another in the same individual: when his second spirit comes upon a possessed person, it often continues the conversation where the first spirit left off, and the only indication of its arrival may be its own announcement in a song or perhaps gulping movements and a gentle falling back of the patient. Finally, of interest psychologically was the farewell dance of all *malopi* just before the *nyali* initiation for girls in September, 1938. Their songs and dances were taboo during the period of the 'school' as they were not allowed to compete with those of the *nyali* which had not yet ended in October, 1939. We must not conclude from this or from the fact that Christians do not become *malopi* that possession is imposture. There are wide avenues for fraud, but most *malopi* are genuine victims of mass-suggestion. The cult, though open to men, is confined largely to women. It is not associated with gifts of prophecy or the finding of lost objects, and there are no revelations concerning the Beyond.

The bearing of the possessed when not dancing is quiet and dignified and detached in contrast to the diabolical manifestations of the possessed in Europe in the Middle Ages. It appears to be neither a paranoic nor a compensatory phenomenon. We dare not relate trance experience with neuroses or psychoses, for we need to orientate ourselves, not from our own, but from a wider relativistic psychology or psychopathology; the mental reflects the cultural configuration and the disposition of drives in the mind must be viewed relatively to the disposition of forces in the culture. The whole cult among the Lovedu is remarkably stereotyped; behaviour under the influence of the spirit, the songs, the things demanded by spirits, conform to a type. Even the possessing spirits themselves are stereotyped, being almost always grandparents.

It is our impression that if any one in the least degree suggestible were made to dance without sustenance for several days in the noise and excitement of seances, he would be liable to fall down exhausted and respond in the traditional manner to the attentions of the women. But not all initiations are successful. In one case witnessed by us, the young woman quite obviously did not want to become possessed: she danced in a half-hearted manner and, under the pretext of tending her baby, kept

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away as much as possible from the doctor. In another, the patient began 744
to stagger towards the end of the second day, but, though every one
expected the spirit to arrive, nothing happened and so the doctor left.
The reason for failure in this case may have been (but we are not sure)
the loud complaints of her brother that no one in the family had ever
been possessed before.

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CHAPTER XV

THE RAIN CULT

The rain-queen in her sphere of safeguarding the seasons—technique of transforming the clouds—evils that cause 'heat' and act as impediments to rain—'cooling' rites counteracting the 'heat' of the earth.

At the centre of the agricultural cycle, rain is the focus of many human interests; as the elixir of life, it is one of the ultimate bases of man's sense of security; and as a manifestation of celestial grace, it is the supreme justification of the divine right of the queen to rule. The queen is primarily not a ruler, but a rain-maker, and men rely for their security, not on regimentation, armies, and organization, but on the queen's power to make rain for the tribe and to withhold rain from its enemies. All ultimate reliances are based upon the magico-religious world, and rain-making and its cult are an important part of that world. The rain cult is not composed of a few magical passes made by the queen; it is a whole complex of institutions with ramifications through many aspects of tribal life. The cult is not confined to measures taken to secure rain in times of drought; its observances must be kept at all times and a good year involves as much care on the part of the queen as a bad one.

The chief actor in the rain cult is the queen. During life, she is not merely the Transformer of the Clouds, but she is regarded as the changer of the seasons and guarantor of their cyclic regularity; when she dies, the seasons are out of joint and drought is inevitable. Her very emotions affect the rain: if she is dissatisfied, angry, or sad, she cannot work well, and in 1934-5, when the first rains did not come till December, the drought was attributed to her being upset at her daughter's liaison with a commoner. Her rain-making is not confined to dramatic ceremonies in time of severe drought; it is conceived of as continuous care throughout the summer. Furthermore, the Lovedu do not attribute every fall of rain to some special activity or volition on the part of their queen, but rather believe that the queen exercises some general control or care which ensures a good season.

Such being the powers of the queen, she is the person to be approached when there is no rain, not only at the beginning of the season, but any time during the summer in a country in which three weeks' drought might ruin the maize crop. There are various ways of doing this. Great councillors or important relatives may approach the queen in person, saying, 'The people are crying,' and asking her to help them. When there was no rain, Mugwena, related to the queen through his mother, used to walk near the queen's hut complaining, in a voice calculated to reach the royal ears, that it was a bad thing for the chief to kill his people by withholding rain. When the first summer storm of 1937 opened with much lightning and thunder, the two chief councillors mentioned informally to the queen at beer that they hoped she would ward off wind and thunder and give them a good year. Heads of districts approach the queen (*ku lava*) with a gift, usually nowadays of £1 or £1 10s., and very often

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tion. There is no trace whatever in the Lowveld of the Tswana ward. Lowveld tribes are totemic, but the totem is neither exogamous nor bound up with any single lineage group. People of the same totem are often not related at all and the lineage group cuts right across the tribe, relatives from the same place of origin and with the same totem often being found in several different tribes. Indeed, the tribe consists only of a small nucleus of members of the ruling family after which it is named, the greater portion being accretions from any and every neighbouring tribe. Thus the majority of members of the Narene are not Narene at all; they are Lobedu, Khaba, Phalaborwa, Kwena, Tokwa, and others who have joined the Narene at various times; and so it is with all Lowveld tribes.

FORMAL EDUCATION. The tribes of the Lowveld have five initiation schools, two, known as *khidze* and *lyale*, for girls, three, *bodika*, *boxwora*, and *komana*, for boys. These schools are not peculiar to the Lowveld; all of them are found also among Sotho tribes of the Highveld of the Northern Transvaal while some, like the *bodika* or circumcision, have a very wide distribution in South Africa. But the *lyale* and *boxwora* in our area have a typical form, not found elsewhere, being held at the same time, while the *komana* appears in its strongest and most characteristic form among Phalaborwa, Khaba, and Narene in the south of our area where, most probably, it had its origin, for it is absent from Pedilland.

Khidze is the private initiation and seclusion of a girl at or shortly after reaching puberty when she is taught the things she should know and do as a woman. The *bodika* or circumcision school is too well known to merit attention here, but the *boxwora*, for boys, which in Sekukuniland and other parts of the Northern Transvaal is held alone, in the Lowveld is linked with and held together with the *lyale* girls' school, the central feature of which is a wonderful 'bird' in a special enclosure which appears on moonlight nights and dances and speaks in a whistle.[1] The true significance of the *komana* has not yet been

[1] In late years these schools have been languishing or dying out in the northern portion of our culture area. The Lobedu have held neither *lyale* nor *komana* for 30 years, while their last circumcision was in 1919. In the south of the area, on the other hand, all the schools are still in full swing, the Lowveld having held their last *bodika* in 1934 and *lyale* in 1936.

[See 2: Krige and Krige for further information on Lovedu cults — AJ]

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111 established. Sometimes a school in which boys receive cuts on either
794 side of the face, it is associated also with rain ritual and with the *dzjow* or ancestral spirits who come to earth and speak in a whistling, wailing manner.

794 An interesting feature of the Northern Transvaal is the tendency for private people, strangers from tribes who have certain schools, to set up schools with the permission of the chiefs in areas where they are not known. People are always willing to join them, and they are a source of great profit to the holder. Thus the Dikxale of the Highveld have no *komane*; but a Narene man who has come to live in the area has brought *komane* drums and holds schools to which many Dikxale go.

836 Sex Morality and Marriage. Sex morality among Lowveld
837 tribes conforms to the general pattern found over South Africa in having pre-marital sex intercourse as an institution fully approved of by society as long as no children are born. Furthermore, adultery, which is an everyday occurrence, is not looked upon as serious in any way unless the parties are indiscreet and are discovered. Widows, especially, are recognized as easy prey to male advances even though
838 they have been inherited by the husband's brother. The fine attached to adultery is usually one head of cattle; but the general laxness is better illustrated in the attitude found among the Narene, where there is no fine attached to adultery, though a man caught in the act will
[195] send something to the husband to beg pardon. In court, the bare word of a woman accusing a man of adultery is always accepted.
[69] Seduction of a young girl is a much more serious offence than adultery, with the correspondingly higher fine attached to it of two head of cattle and a goat, and realization that marriage is much more than a sexual relationship between the parties concerned is shown in the fact that far from trying to promote marriage between the parties concerned, the parents of the girl will refuse any alliance with a boy whose people they do not consider suitable.

582 Like all Sotho peoples, the Lowveld tribes have the institution of
[71] preferred marriage with certain relatives, in contrast to the Zulu-Xhosa with whom marriage with any related person is taboo. Fully 40 per cent. of all marriages are, in our Lowveld area, with the

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783 789 cooled with rain-medicine. The polluted corpse (called *pukudi*, the opposite of *fugu*) is thought of as thrusting up an arm and waving it about to disperse the rain.

643 821 It is the duty of the queen each year to *thea* or 'establish' the season propitiously for her people. Certain district heads who are close relatives of the queen have rainpots which they revitalize every year with medicine from the queen and stir them up at the queen's command to ensure a propitious season. In the old days the year was 'established' also by the beating of the sacred drums (*gwama*) and a visit to the royal ancestor graves, but this has fallen into disuse.

643 821 789 731 If there is drought or if the rain does not come at its appropriate time, people say the queen has not changed the year properly and steps are taken to approach her. Royal relatives may approach her personally or complain in her hearing that she is killing her people by withholding rain; district heads may formally pay homage (*ku leva*) with gifts of £1 or a head of cattle, or may bring a troupe of dancers to please her and invoke her pity at the spectacle of people dancing when they should be hoeing. The songs (*lenga*) are associated with offerings to the ancestors and with rain. If these efforts are of no avail diviners are consulted to determine the cause of drought—the rain-charms may have been 'weakened' or evil practices of witches may [789] have prevented rain. In 1937 the people were told at a tribal gathering to report lightning 'sent' by witches, and shortly afterwards, when lightning had struck a tree near a village, boys were sent to sprinkle every house in the area with *mufugo* to 'cool' the lightning. Witches may also disperse rain by hanging up medicated branches which sway in the air. If it is an ancestor that is 'holding the queen's hands' he or she has to be propitiated by the sacrifice of a black beast or sheep on the grave.

643 784 821 When winds frustrate the efforts of the queen to make rain, especially when a gale disperses suspicious black clouds, people come to condole with her as if she had lost a relative, and it is taboo to work in the fields the next day, just as it is on the day after the first rain of the season and on certain other occasions.

643 821 The queen is 'Transformer of the Clouds', the changer of the seasons, and guarantor of their cyclic regularity, but she can exercise her powers suspiciously only in certain conditions and in 'agreement with the ancestors'.

Digoma

778 ●794 481 The fourth category of forces by which nature is regulated in the interests of man consists of *digoma* which are associated more especially with changes in the status of man. A *goma* is primarily a drum, but as an abstract concept it is particularly identified with the power concentrated in the drum cult. This cult includes the large complex of institutions connected with rites of transition, of which the year-long *nyali-vukwevu* (fertility cult) is one. A *goma* is thought of as something mystical and secret, awesome and esoteric. The circumcision 'school' for boys is called a *goma* which is said to 'bite'

4: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1954
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the initiates. It is something mystically powerful which transforms boys into men. But if the initiation as a whole is a *gomo*, so also are the secret formulae, objects, and mummeries that form part of the ceremony.

With the *nyali-vukwara* fertility cult, which is at the same time also an initiation for girls (*nyali*) and for boys (*vukwara*), are associated many *digoma*, in the form of masked figures in costumes made of grass, reeds, and leaves, or plays and mummeries emphasizing the value of certain foods. But the greatest of all is *Khiudiqomo*, Bird of Muhale (the royal founder ancestor), ruling spirit of the *nyali*, which is believed to emerge from a pool on moonlight nights, leave mists behind it when it departs, and upon which much of the ritual centres. It is the link between two aspects of sacred forces, that conceived as mysterious, fearful, approached only through elaborate symbolism, and that represented by ancestors and directly approached. For the bird is both a great *gomo* and a symbol of the royal ancestors.

Revived in 1938, after an interval of twenty years, the *nyali-vukwara* with its great *digoma* is thought to promote abundance and rain, the welfare and happiness of the people. While it lasts it is the main national interest to which all energies are bent and all activities subordinated. Marriages are held up, the normal judicial machinery is at a standstill, and anything that might compete with the ceremonial is interdicted. Since initiates spend only early mornings and evenings at the secret enclosure, they sleep at home and are able to carry on essential domestic tasks for the greater part of the day.

The sacred drums of the tribe (*digoma*), four in number, are kept and cared for by the people of Ravothata, a lineage that came from Phalaborwa, where the drum cult is more intimately connected with the chief than among the Lovedu. These drums, which are said to contain under the resonator a human skull and, in the case of the smallest, the facial skin of a councillor, are mystically linked with the life of the queen and the welfare of the tribe. The heir sits on the smallest drum while being taught the rain ritual and it must accompany the queen if ever she is forced to flee from her enemies. The sacred drums are spoken of as *vadimo* (gods) as well as *digoma*, and they were beaten twice a year in the old days in a ceremony known as *gomana* as an appeal to the ancestors for rain and to thank them for the harvest. The latter took the form of an initiation into the secrets of the cult at which boys were given certain cuts on their faces.

Associated with the sacred drums and also classed as *digoma* are the *midajani*, the weird whistling ancestor spirits of the royal lineage who come to earth in the guise, it is said, of half-men with one eye, one arm, and one leg, to take part in the rites connected with the sacred drums and in the annual harvest *thugula* ceremony in all royal and certain other lineages. They are, in fact, as is known to those initiated in the *gomana*, old men masquerading as spirits. They appear in the bush near the village and join in the singing of *lirugu* songs which are sung, on these occasions, through specially constructed secret whistles.